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(71) Applicant

Barcrest Limited

(Incorporated in United Kingdom)

Margaret Street, Ashton-under-Lyne,
Lancashire, OL7 0QQ

(72) Inventor

Barry Allen Marchini

(74) Agent and/or Address for Service

M'Caw & Co

41-51 Royal Exchange, Cross Street,
Manchester, M2 7BD

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(54) Entertainment machine

(57) A coin operated machine can be used to play games resulting in scores. The machine stores the highest score in an internal memory (12) and provides a record, such as a printed ticket, to be retained by the player. At the end of a predetermined playing period a prize can be awarded to the player who has attained the highest score.

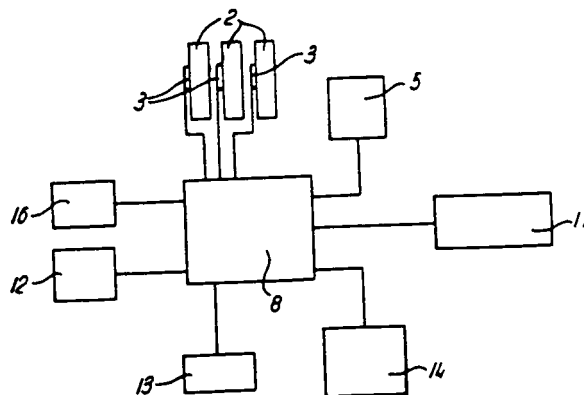
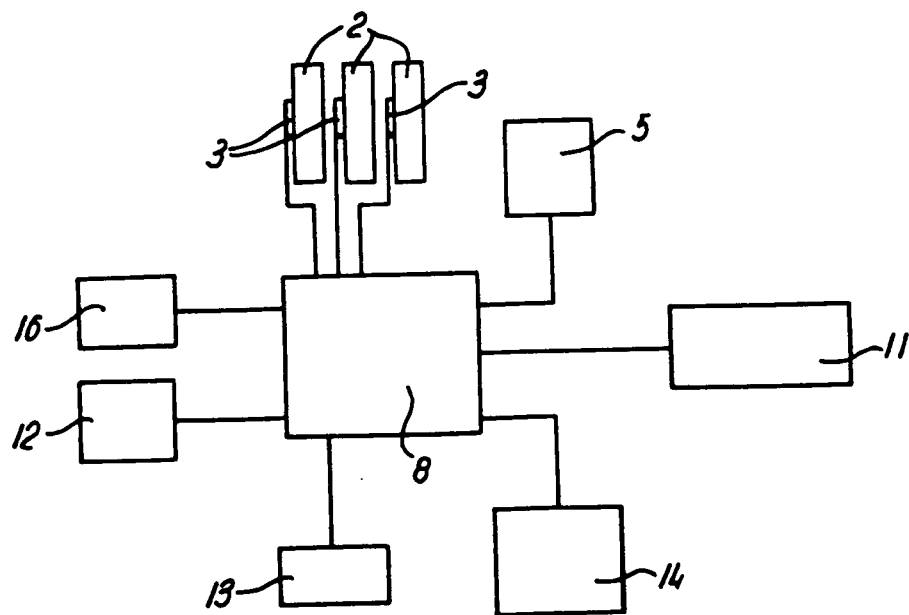
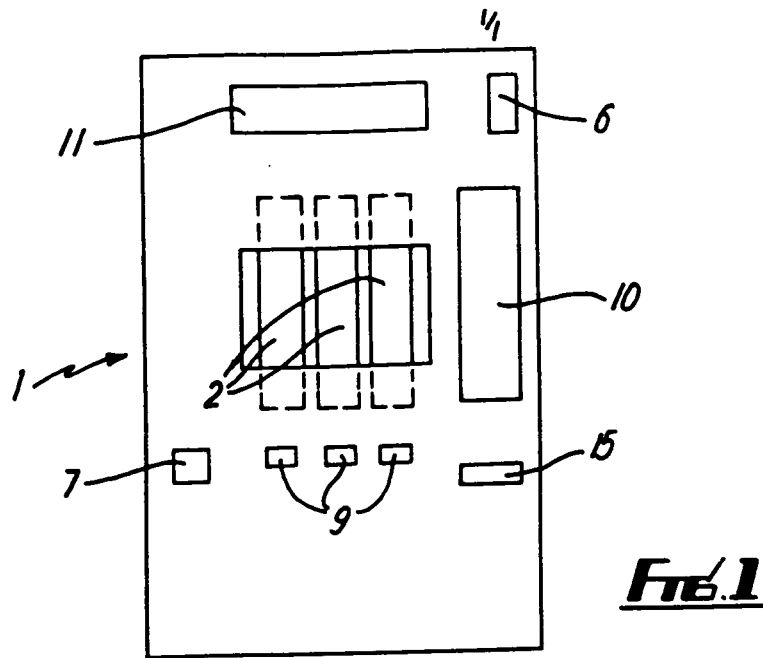


Fig. 2



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ENTERTAINMENT MACHINE

This invention relates to an entertainment machine of the kind which can be operated by a player, after actuation of the machine by insertion of one or more coins (or tokens) therein, to play a game resulting in an attained score.

Known entertainment machines of the above kind include machines for playing games of chance, such as fruit machines, and machines for playing games of skill, such as pin-ball machines and video game machines. With such known machines, the player may be motivated to attain the highest possible win or score in an individual game or during a playing session, and entertainment can be derived from this. This motivation can be much promoted by arranging for the machine to pay out prize awards when predetermined wins or scores are attained, and this is commonly the case with fruit machines. However, depending on the nature of the machine and its intended location, it may not always be appropriate or desirable or permissible for there to be provision for such payouts and, by way of example, fruit machines are known which do not give payouts but simply display attained scores.

In some cases with the above mentioned known entertainment machines there can also be the motivation for players to compete against each other during a playing session or even during a period of time, say during an evening or week, and for example, on some video games an

opportunity is given for a player attaining a highest score to enter his initials into the machine against a record of the score. However, such competitive motivation may not be appropriate for all kinds of machines and may be of little
5 interest to a player who plays a machine by himself and who does not regularly play or monitor the playing of that particular machine, as for example in the case of a person who is a casual visitor to a location, where the machine is sited, e.g. in the case of a car driver playing with a
10 machine in a petrol filling station.

An object of the present invention is to provide an entertainment machine which can promote competitive motivation and can be of interest even to casual players.

According to the invention therefore there is provided an
15 entertainment machine which is operable by a player, after actuation by insertion therein of one or more coins (or tokens), to play a game resulting in an attained score, characterised in that said machine has a storage device operable to store at least one such score, and a dispensing device operable to
20 dispense a record bearing the score to be retained by the player.

With this arrangement, the player receiving the score record can be motivated to return to the machine to see if his attained score is the highest (or meets some other criterion) during a particular period of time, e.g. during a
25 week or month, especially if a prize is awarded or made available for the highest score (or other criterion). In

this way player interest can be much promoted, even for casual players, even in the case of machines for playing games not normally of a competitive nature and in the case of machines which do not give prize payouts. From the point of view of usage of the machine this can be promoted insofar, for example, casual players are encouraged to return to the machine, and this advantageously may have the effect of encouraging persons to re-use other facilities at the site where the machine is located, e.g. petrol filling station facilities.

With regard to the retainable score record, this may take any suitable form but conveniently may comprise a printed ticket. The retainable score record may be issued whenever a score is attained or alternatively may be issued only when the attained score is the highest score (or meets some other ranking criterion) during a particular playing period. The machine may be arranged to display the current highest score.

To facilitate verification of a retainable score record information additional to the score generated by the machine and/or entered by the player may also be stored both on the retainable record and also in the corresponding machine record. Such information may comprise date and/or time and/or a serial number, game number or the like.

The machine may be arranged for playing a game of chance and thus for example may be a fruit machine having a device,

e.g. rotatable reels, for displaying a randomly selected combination of fruit or other symbols. Alternatively the machine may be arranged for playing a game of skill such as a pin ball machine or a video game machine. The machine may be
5 arranged to award prizes in the usual manner at the end of winning games in addition to any prize awarded or made available to the highest score (or other winning criterion) attained at the end of a predetermined period. Alternatively only the latter prize may be awarded or made available. The
10 said latter prize may be awarded by the machine or may be made available for collection by the player at the site where the machine is located or elsewhere, on presentation of the winning retainable score record.

The invention will now be described further by way of
15 example only and with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:-

Fig. 1 is a diagrammatic front view of one form of a machine according to the invention; and

Fig. 2 is a circuit diagram of the machine of Fig.1.

20 The machine shown in the drawings is of the fruit machine kind and has, within a housing 1, three or four reels 2. with symbols around their peripheries. The reels 2 can be rotated by means of stepper motors 3 for different respective random periods of time so as to come to rest with a selected
25 combination of symbols displayed through a window 4 in the front of the machine housing 1.

In use, the machine is actuated by a player by insertion of one or more coins or tokens into a coin mechanism 5 through a coin slot 6 and the reels 2 are set in motion by pressing a start button 7. rotation of the reels 2 is controlled by a microprocessor-based control circuit 8 which feeds pulses to the stepper motors 3. When the reel 2 come to rest their positions are evaluated by the control circuit 8 (such positions being determined from their starting positions and the number of pulses fed to the stepper motors 3) and a score is derived in correspondence with the combination of symbols displayed through the window 4, different such combinations corresponding to different scores as indicated on a 'win chart' on the front of the machine housing 1.

Nudge and hold buttons 9 are provided so that on occasions (which may be selected by the machine at random) the player is given an opportunity of trying to improve a selected combination at the end of a game by nudging one or more reels 2 through one or more stopping positions and/or at the start of a game by holding one or more reels 2 against rotation.

Randomly and/or on a predetermined basis as determined by the control circuit and/or determined by the stopping position of one or more of the reels 2, feature displays 10 are illuminated on the front of the machine housing and supplementary scores, such as jackpot scores, may be made

available for addition to the game score. Also, there may be the possibility of enhancement of game and/or jackpot scores on a random chance basis and/or by means of a gamble feature e.g. whereby the player has the option of accepting an
5 attained score or operating a gamble control which can increase (e.g. double) or decrease (e.g. halve) the attained score depending on the timing of the operation of the control. Further, there may be the possibility of the player being awarded additional 'nudges' or 'holds'.

10 The attained score at the end of the game is displayed prominently on a visual display device 11 on the machine housing 1.

As so far described the machine is a conventional non-prize fruit machine. However, in accordance with the
15 present invention, the machine is provided with a score storage device 12 and a timer 13, and also a ticket printer and dispenser 14.

[The timer 13 is operable to time a predetermined period, say one week or one month, and during that period the score
20 attained by a player at the end of a game is assessed to see if it is the highest score obtained so far during that period. If it is, it is stored in the memory 12 in conjunction with data, such as the date and time of day and a serial number. At the same time the ticket printer and
25 dispenser 14 is actuated to cause a ticket to be printed with the score and above mentioned data, and the ticket is

dispensed to the player through a slot 15 in the machine.

At the end of the period timed by the timer, the timer is automatically re-set to zero and the memory is cleared. However, a record is kept in a subsidiary memory 16 of the highest score attained by the end of the timed period, together with the above mentioned associated data, and the ticket printer 14 can be instructed, by means of operator controls within the machine, to print such score and data on a ticket and dispense this ticket to an authorised person (site operator) responsible for the operation of the machine.

The player who obtained the highest score by the end of the timed period can obtain a prize from the site operator on presenting his winning ticket which matches with the site operator's ticket.

The machine may show, on the display 11 (or on a remote display device connected to the machine and located at a prominent position elsewhere on the site) information concerning winning scores from one or more previous timed periods, if desired together with the highest score so far in the current timed period.

Provision may be made for the start and duration of the timed period to be set by the site operator using internal machine controls.

With the above described embodiment it will be appreciated that there can be considerable player interest despite the lack of prize payouts from the machine having

regard to the attraction of the prize awarded for the highest score. Moreover, interest can be derived from the competitive element and, insofar as this motivates a casual player of the machine to return to the site at a later date
5 within the timed period to see if he has obtained the winning highest score, this can help promote other facilities at the site.

It is of course to be understood that the invention is not intended to be restricted to the details of the above
10 embodiment which are described by way of example only. Thus, for example, the invention is not restricted to fruit machines but may be used with other kinds of machines.

CLAIMS

1. An entertainment machine which is operable by a player, after actuation, by insertion therein of one or more coins (or tokens) to play a game resulting in
5 an attained score, wherein said machine has a storage device operable to store at least one such score, and a dispensing device operable to dispense a record bearing the score to be retained by the player.
2. An entertainment machine as claimed in claim 1,
10 wherein said machine is a fruit-machine.
3. An entertainment machine as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein said dispensing device is arranged to dispense said retainable score record in the form of a printed ticket.
- 15 4. An entertainment machine as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein said storage device is arranged to store information additional to the score and the dispensing device is operable to dispense said record bearing said additional information as well as said
20 score.
5. An entertainment machine as claimed in any of claims 1 to 4, wherein said machine further includes a timer and said storage device and said dispensing device are arranged to store said score and dispense
25 said record only when the attained score is the current highest score during a predetermined timed playing period.

6. An entertainment machine as claimed in claim 5, wherein said machine is arranged to dispense a further said record at the end of the said period bearing the highest score attained during said period.

5 7. An entertainment machine as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein said machine is arranged to display the current highest score.

8. An entertainment machine substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to, and as
10 illustrated in, the accompanying drawings.